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Review of Understanding Healthcare Information by Lyn Robinson

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Understanding Healthcare Information. Lyn Robinson. *London: Facet Publishing*, *2010*. 256 pages. $125.00. ISBN13: 978-1-85604-662-6.

This textbook by Lyn Robinson, an instructor in the Department of Information Science at City University London, asserts that because healthcare is such a complex information domain to competently provide healthcare information one must understand its organization. The domain of healthcare information is presented by analyzing its history, its producers and users, its organization, its retrieval and finally, the actual providing of the information. Unlike a more comprehensive textbook, such as *Introduction to Health Sciences Librarianship* by M. Sandra Wood, this book focuses strictly on the healthcare knowledge base and the information communication chain that healthcare professionals, librarians, and consumers use on a daily basis.

After describing the past and present state of healthcare in chapter 1, chapter 2 details the history of healthcare information and how this information has been recorded. The scientific advances and development of medical publishing is concisely summed up in 20 pages with the author reviewing the progression of publication forms advancing from clay tablets to papyri, to monographs, to journals to e-journals. In another chapter the language of the organization of healthcare is covered such as controlled vocabularies, metadata, taxonomies, subject headings, abstracting and indexing. In addition to the ICD-10 and the Dewey Decimal and National Library of Medicine classification systems, she details UK systems such as Wessex, SNOMED (the Systematised Nomenclature of Medicine), the British National Formulary classification and the Public Health Language. The chapter on retrieval covers primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary sources with specific examples, while the chapter on knowledge management notes that public libraries are being placed in an increasingly visible role as providers of medical information to ever more astute consumers.

The book itself is paperback, printed in a small font, and is fairly expensive. The UK-focus is interesting and probably unfamiliar to many US librarians. There are many online and print references at the end of each chapter as well as a list of acronyms and abbreviations. The author acknowledges that URL links change and has established a supplemental blog (http://understandinghealthcareinformation.com) as “a ‘working copy’ of a second edition”. She appears open to conversations with her audience through this medium. The author envisions her audience as healthcare providers, the general public, healthcare information specialists, librarians and library science educators. However, established health sciences librarians will probably not be compelled to purchase this book. The high level of language and theories of organization makes this more suitable for schools of library science, informaticians, or to librarians new to providing healthcare information, such as public librarians.